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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1385
INFO RUCNAFG/AFGHANISTAN COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHZG/NATO EU COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL IMMEDIATE 6604
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JCS WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE
RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L ANKARA 001727

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/04/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MOPS](#) [AF](#) [TU](#)

SUBJECT: TURKEY/AFGHANISTAN: MORE TROOPS POSSIBLE, NO
COMBAT ROLE

REF: A. ANKARA 1713

[1](#)B. ANKARA 1702

Classified By: DCM Doug Silliman, Reasons 1.4 (b,d)

[1](#)1. (C) Despite initial wide-spread and deep skepticism in the media and reactions ranging from frustration to outrage from senior GoT contacts about the U.S. request for more Turkish troops in Afghanistan (reftel), several media outlets (pro-government Zaman, mass circulation Aksam, and secularist Cumhuriyet) reported on December 4 that Prime Minister Erdogan is expected to indicate a willingness to deploy more Turkish troops to Afghanistan in his December 7 meeting with the President. Erdogan, however, is also expected to refuse our request for Turkey to lift its remaining caveats on its forces in Afghanistan. According to a report in Aksam, PM Erdogan is expected to indicate that Turkey is seriously examining the deployment of an additional 500 more troops for Afghanistan, but not in a combat role. We have not been able to confirm these reports with GoT contacts.

[1](#)2. (C) MFA Deputy U/S Soysal, Turkey's senior representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, told visiting Deputy SRAP Feldman on December 3 that FM Davutoglu is expected to announce some specific additional contributions focused on training at the NATO FM meeting scheduled for December 4.

[1](#)3. (C) President Gul, responding to questions from journalists on his return from Jordan on December 3, said that, "Turkey's activities in Afghanistan will increase, but we will decide on how to do it." He added that Turkey would continue to abstain from involvement in clashes in Afghanistan and that "if we fight, we will lose the respect of all sides, including the Taliban." Gul told the press that military measures were not sufficient to solve the problems in Afghanistan, and added that Turkey is looking to make contributions on issues where other countries were unable to contribute. "Ensuring the involvement of the opposition in politics is one of these issues," Gul is quoted as saying by Zaman.

[1](#)4. (C) Comment: The media's initial reaction to the full-court press on the ground here and from Washington ranged from luke-warm to sharply negative, but our approach now appears to be making some limited headway in increasing Turkey's willingness to deploy some form of additional military forces to Afghanistan, perhaps more military trainers. Still, Turkish troops in a direct combat role in Afghanistan remains a bridge too far for the Turks politically. The political and military leadership is in consensus on this issue and their views are bolstered by strong public sentiments against Turkish forces participating

in combat operations in Afghanistan. End Comment.

JEFFREY

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